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SUBJECT: HMG'S VIEWS ON INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN  
AND NEPAL

REF: LONDON 236

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. HMG is "cautiously optimistic" about the progress of India's relationship, with Pakistan and the U.S. and HMG should "compare notes" this fall to determine "how serious the Indians actually are in relaxing their rhetoric toward Pakistan," Neil Kernohan, Head of the India, Nepal and Bhutan Team, South Asia Group (SAG), at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), told Poloff July 30. India is worried about China's role throughout the region, including Nepal, fearing "encirclement" by China, Kernohan said. HMG views democratic India as a positive actor for advancing regional stability. End Summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Neil Kernohan, Head of the India, Nepal and Bhutan Team, South Asia Group (SAG), at the FCO, told Poloff July 30 that HMG is pleased to be "still dealing" with the Congress Party and Prime Minister Singh. He characterized the Congress Party's success in this spring's elections as a "vote for stability, intelligence, common sense," and an international outlook, qualities he attributed to Singh. Kernohan said that India seemed to be "on a roll" of positive momentum over the past few years. Britain and India share a solid, "significant relationship," and Indian President Patil will visit the UK October 27-29, Kernohan said.

India - Pakistan  
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¶3. (C/NF) Kernohan said that HMG is "cautiously optimistic" about the progress of India's relationship with Pakistan. He suggested that the U.S. and HMG should "compare notes" this fall to determine "how serious the Indians actually are in relaxing their rhetoric toward Pakistan." According to Kernohan, the recent relaxation on the Indian side reflects a "real window of opportunity" to improve India-Pakistan relations. He suggested that James Downer, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Washington, would welcome discussion of India-Pakistan relations with U.S. counterparts at the State Department this fall. Kernohan observed that there is a degree of skepticism within Indian leadership circles toward HMG's role in the region, with some suspecting the UK of being "too close" to Pakistan. Kernohan stated that HMG is working to convince Pakistan's leadership that Pakistan's existential threat stems not from India but from internal terrorists.

India - Nepal  
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¶4. (C/NF) India "tends to treat Nepal as India's backyard," Kernohan averred. He said that India's leadership was "suspicious" of the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and suspected that "China's hand was behind the drafting" of the July 23 UNSC extension of the UNMIN mandate. India is worried about

China's role throughout the region, including Nepal, fearing "encirclement" by China. HMG will continue to monitor India's role in Nepal. Kernohan said that political progress in Nepal is moving forward at a "snail's pace."

Comment

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15. (C/NF) Kernohan's praise for PM Singh echoes Foreign Minister Miliband's appreciation earlier this year for Singh's restraint in the wake of the Mumbai bombings (Ref). HMG views democratic India as a positive actor for advancing regional stability -- a point that Kernohan stressed several times in his discussion with Poloff. End Comment.

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